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SECSTATE PASS SECDEF, JCS, USCINCCENT

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: MARR, MASS PREL, EG, US, XF

SUBJECT: CODEL SOLARZ MEETING WITH DEFENSE MINISTER

1. SECRET - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. BEGIN SUMMARY. IN A WIDE-RANGING DISCUSSION WITH
 CODEL SOLARZ, DEFENSE MINISTER ABU GHAZALA MADE FOLLOWING
 POINTS: HE IS 100 PERCENT SURE LIBYA IS RESPONSIBLE FOR
 RECENT MINING; EGYPT FACES SERIOUS MILITARY, POLITICAL OR
 ECONOMIC THREATS FROM SOVIETS, LIBYA AND ETHIOPIA; THERE
 ARE NO MILITARY PROBLEMS WITH ISRAEL, BUT SERIOUS
 POLITICAL ONES; IRAQ CAN WITHSTAND AN IRANIAN OFFENSIVE;
 THE U.S. SHOULD MAKE ARAB-ISRAELI PEACE ITS TOP PRIORITY;
 AND EGYPT NEEDED 1.3 BILLION DOLS THIS YEAR FOR ITS
 MILITARY MODERNIZATION WHICH AIMS AT A SMALLER, BUT BETTER
 ARMED FORCES. END SUMMARY.

3. DEFENSE MINISTER ABU GHAZALA MET WITH CODEL SOLARZ AND
 AMBASSADOR AUG. 19 TO DISCUSS WIDE RANGE OF STRATEGIC AND
 POLITICAL ISSUES. THE DEFENSE MINISTER WAS JOINED BY MGEN
 (RET.) MUNIR SHASH, GOVERNOR OF NORTH SINAI. CODEL WAS
 JOINED BY HIS AIDES AND EMBASSY OFFICERS.

4. GULF OF SUEZ/RED SEA MINING. ASKED FOR AN UPDATE ON
 RECENT MINING INCIDENTS, THE DEFENSE MINISTER SAID HE IS
 NOW "IN A POSITION TO SAY IT IS LIBYA (WHO IS RESPONSIBLE)."
 NOTING INITIAL SUSPICIONS CENTERING ON IRAN, ABU GHAZALA
 SAID THAT HE IS, SINCE TWO DAYS AGO, "100 PERCENT SURE"
 THAT LIBYA IS RESPONSIBLE. HE BASED HIS JUDGMENT ON THE
 TIMING OF THE GHAT PASSAGE THROUGH THE AREA AND INFORMATION

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SECRET

84 4987344

SSO

PAGE 002

NC 4987344

TOR: 212121Z AUG 84

THAT LIBYAN MILITARY OFFICERS HAD BEEN SUBSTITUTED FOR REGULAR CREW MEMBERS PRIOR TO THAT PASSAGE. ABU GHAZALA ALSO ASSERTED THAT HE HAD INFORMATION THAT THE MINES IN QUESTION WERE BOUGHT FROM ITALY.

5. LIBYA. ASKED ABOUT LIBYAN CAPABILITIES AND THE SOVIET PRESENCE THERE, ABU GHAZALA REPLIED THAT THERE ARE MORE THAN 350 PILOTS FROM VARIOUS COUNTRIES IN LIBYA: 65 SOVIETS, 30 NORTH KOREANS, 60 SYRIANS, 60 PALESTINIANS AND "UNFORTUNATELY" A NUMBER OF PAKISTANIS. SOVIETS PILOTED LIBYA'S MIG-25S AND NORTH KOREANS PILOTED MIG-23S AND TU-22S. ABU GHAZALA SAID MERCENARIES ALSO OPERATED TANKS ALTHOUGH MOST TANK CREWS ARE LIBYAN. OF THE MORE THAN 4,000 CUBANS IN LIBYA, MOST ARE TANK OPERATORS. HE ALSO NOTED THAT EAST GERMANY PROVIDED SECURITY FOR QADHAFI AS WELL AS SOME PILOTS. ASKED TO ASSESS THE LIBYAN ARSENAL, ABU GHAZALA SAID THAT MUCH OF THE EQUIPMENT IS IN WAREHOUSES OR SUBJECT TO MAINTENANCE PROBLEMS. NEVERTHELESS, IT IS SERVICEABLE. HE EXPRESSED HIS VIEW THAT LIBYA WOULD ONE DAY ATTACK EGYPT AND NOTED THAT 70 PERCENT OF LIBYA'S ARMED FORCES ARE IN EASTERN LIBYA. MOREOVER, QADHAFI IS REORGANIZING THOSE FORCES INTO DIVISIONS AND BRIGADES TO FACILITATE SUCH AN ATTACK. WHILE LIBYA ENJOYS AN ADVANTAGE IN EQUIPMENT, ABU GHAZALA SAID, EGYPT ENJOYS AN ADVANTAGE IN ITS TRAINED PERSONNEL. IT IS THE LACK OF TRAINED MANPOWER THAT GIVES QADHAFI PAUSE. ASKED ABOUT QADHAFI'S SUPPORT INTERNALLY, ABU GHAZALA REPLIED THAT THE PEOPLE AS A WHOLE ARE NOT SUPPORTIVE, BUT THAT THE MILITARY WITH SOME EXCEPTIONS IS.

6. SUDAN. ABU GHAZALA SAID HIS OTHER PRIMARY CONCERN FOR EGYPTIAN SECURITY IS IN THE SOUTH. HE EMPHASIZED THE GRAVE DANGER FACING EGYPT SHOULD SUDAN EVER FALL UNDER HOSTILE INFLUENCE. SOLARZ ASKED ABU GHAZALA TO COMMENT UPON NIMEIRI'S RECENT POLICIES AND ALLEGED PERSONALITY CHANGE. ABU GHAZALA SAID HE HAD MADE A THOROUGH STUDY IN VIEW OF THE IMPORTANCE OF SUDAN AND CONCLUDED THAT NIMEIRI REMAINS IN CONTROL. THERE ARE SERIOUS INTERNAL PROBLEMS, BUT THESE ARE NOT A CRITICAL DANGER TO HIS REGIME. MOREOVER, HE EMPHASIZED, NIMEIRI IS THE ONLY VIABLE LEADER. THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE. AT THE SAME TIME, HE ACKNOWLEDGED, IMPLEMENTATION OF SHARIA' LAW AND POLICIES WHICH ALIENATE THE SOUTH ARE MAJOR PROBLEMS. ABU GHAZALA SAID HE BELIEVES NIMEIRI IS BACKING OFF PREVIOUS POSITIONS ON SUCH ISSUES.

7. ETHIOPIA. SOLARZ RECALLED PRESIDENT SADAT'S FEARS

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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

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THAT ETHIOPIA MIGHT DIVERT NILE WATERS AND ASKED ABU GHAZALA TO COMMENT. ABU GHAZALA REPLIED THAT ETHIOPIA'S SUCCESS IN FRUSTRATING THE JONGLEI CANAL PROJECT IN SUDAN IS PROOF THAT THOSE FEARS WERE WELL FOUNDED. HE BLAMED THE ETHIOPIANS FOR SUPPORTING THE SUDANESE DISSIDENTS WHO CAUSED THE DELAY IN PROCEEDING WITH THE CANAL. (ABU GHAZALA ESTIMATED THAT EGYPT AND SUDAN COULD EACH GAIN FOUR BILLION CUBIC METERS OF WATER ANNUALLY AS A RESULT OF THE CANAL.) MOREOVER, ABU GHAZALA EMPHASIZED, THE ETHIOPIANS ARE PURSUING DAMS AND DIVERSIONS ON THE BLUE NILE WITH RUSSIAN ADVICE AND WITHOUT CONSENT OF RIPARIAN STATES WHICH HAVE POTENTIALLY SERIOUS IMPACT ON EGYPT.

SECRET

SECRET

84 4987344

SSO

PAGE 003

NC 4987344

TOR: 212121Z AUG 84

8. IRAQ/IRAN. ASKED TO ASSESS THE WAR, ABU GHAZALA SAID HIS RECENT TALKS WITH IRAQI FOREIGN MINISTER TARQI AZIZ LEAD HIM TO BELIEVE THAT NO IRANIAN VICTORY IS LIKELY FOR THE TIME BEING. SOLARZ NOTED THAT WARS ARE HISTORICALLY UNPREDICTABLE AND THE FRENCH HAD BEEN MISTAKEN (WITH SUCH AN ASSESSMENT) IN 1940. ABU GHAZALA CONCEDED THAT MISTAKES ARE POSSIBLE, BUT ARGUED THAT IRAQI TRAINING AND WEAPONS ARE SO IMPROVED THAT AN IRANIAN SUCCESS IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY. MOREOVER, ABU GHAZALA ADDED, HE DID NOT BELIEVE IRAN HAD THE CAPABILITY OF COMMANDING AND CONTROLLING ITS 500,000 SOLDIERS IN THAT SECTOR. ASKED TO PREDICT THE COURSE OF THE WAR, ABU GHAZALA SAID HE ANTICIPATES TWO YEARS OF ATTRITION. BEYOND THAT, HE WOULD NOT HAZARD A GUESS. ASKED ABOUT KHARG ISLAND, ABU GHAZALA REPLIED THAT HE BELIEVES IT IS VULNERABLE TO IRAQI ATTACKS, BUT THAT IRAQ HAS SHOWN CALCULATED RESTRAINT FOR FEAR OF IRANIAN RETALIATION, E.G., BLOCKING OF HORMUZ OR THE ESCALATION OF PERSONAL ATTACKS AGAINST SADDAM HUSSEIN. IN THE LATTER REGARD, HUSSEIN MAY FEEL VULNERABLE SINCE THERE IS MURMURING IN IRAQ THAT THE WAR CONTINUES ONLY BECAUSE ONE MAN--I.E., SADDAM HUSSEIN--REMAINS IN POWER. ASKED TO ASSESS THE LIKELY CONSEQUENCES OF AN IRANIAN BREAKTHROUGH, ABU GHAZALA PREDICTED A COLLAPSE WITHIN 24 HOURS OF ALL OF THE GOVERNMENTS IN THE GULF STATES. HE ARGUED THAT, UNLIKE IN THE U.S., THE PEOPLE IN THE GULF DO NOT SUPPORT THE LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT, BUT MERELY FOLLOW WHOEVER APPEARS THE STRONGEST. WHILE THE THREAT TO MOST OF THE GULF STATES IS PRIMARILY INTERNAL, IRAN ITSELF WOULD BE FREE TO MOVE INTO KUWAIT. ASKED TO ASSESS THE CONSEQUENCES OF AN IRANIAN COLLAPSE, POSSIBLY CONNECTED WITH KHOMEINI'S DEATH, ABU GHAZALA SAID THAT THE GULF'S VIEW IS THAT SUCH A DEVELOPMENT WOULD ALSO BE DANGEROUS. SOME FEAR A VICTORIOUS IRAQ WOULD IMMEDIATELY INVADE KUWAIT. ABU GHAZALA SAID AN IRANIAN VICTORY WOULD NOT ITSELF INSPIRE INTERNAL THREATS IN EGYPT, AS IN THE GULF, BUT THAT EGYPT WOULD BE EXPOSED TO INCREASED EXTERNAL THREATS IF THE GULF STATES AND SAUDI ARABIA FELL VICTIMS, AND THE SHI'ITE? REACHED THE RED SEA. SOLARZ ASKED ABOUT EGYPTIAN VOLUNTEERS SERVING IN THE IRAQI ARMED FORCES. ABU GHAZALA REPLIED THAT THERE ARE 2.5 MILLION EGYPTIANS IN IRAQ, MANY OF WHOM HAVE ASSUMED IRAQI NATIONALITY. SINCE EGYPTIAN LAW PROVIDES FOR THE LOSS OF EGYPTIAN NATIONALITY TO CITIZENS ADOPTING A SECOND NATIONALITY WITHOUT EGYPTIAN APPROVAL, ABU GHAZALA SAID HE DOES NOT CONSIDER SUCH INDIVIDUALS TO BE EGYPTIANS. HE SAID HE DOES NOT KNOW FOR SURE HOW MANY ARE SERVING IN THE IRAQI ARMED FORCES, BUT ESTIMATES FEWER THAN 20,000. THE VAST MAJORITY ARE EMPLOYED IN CONSTRUCTION, INDUSTRY AND AGRICULTURE. (OTHER SENIOR GOE SOURCES PUT THE NUMBER OF EGYPTIANS IN IRAQ AT 1.3 MILLION.)

10. ISRAELI-ARAB RELATIONS. SOLARZ ASKED ABU GHAZALA TO ASSESS POSSIBLE THREATS TO ISRAEL FROM ARAB STATES. ABU GHAZALA REPLIED THAT SYRIA IS NOT CAPABLE OF DEFEATING ISRAEL, BUT COULD ATTACK IN ORDER TO MAKE A POLITICAL POINT TO THE ARAB WORLD. THE ENSUING BATTLE WOULD BE A TOUGH ONE AND ISRAEL MIGHT BE HURT, BUT THE SYRIANS COULD NOT WIN. JORDAN IS IN AN AWKWARD POSITION, BUT CERTAINLY DOES NOT WANT TO FIGHT ISRAEL. NEVERTHELESS, IT IS DIFFICULT TO KNOW OR TO PREDICT HUSSEIN'S THINKING WHICH IS EXTREMELY SOPHISTICATED. SOLARZ NOTED THAT IN PAST CONFLICTS PARTICIPANTS HAD EXERCISED RELATIVE SELF-RESTRAINT. FOR

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SECRET

SECRET

84 4987344

SSO

PAGE 004

NC 4987344

TOR: 212121Z AUG 84

EXAMPLE, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF ISRAEL'S ATTACK ON BEIRUT, CITIES HAD BEEN SPARED. HE ASKED IF ABU GHAZALA THOUGHT SUCH RESTRAINT WOULD CONTINUE. ABU GHAZALA REPLIED IN THE NEGATIVE. ARABS MIGHT CONCLUDE THAT THE ONLY WAY TO BRING ISRAEL TO THE PEACE TABLE IS TO THREATEN SUCH TARGETS. HE THOUGHT SYRIA MIGHT USE ANYTHING IN ITS ARSENAL TO DO SO.

11. LEBANON. SOLARZ ASKED FOR ABU GHAZALA'S ASSESSMENT OF THE LIKELIHOOD OF SYRIAN WITHDRAWAL IF ISRAEL DID SO. ABU GHAZALA SAID HE THOUGHT THE SYRIANS IN THAT CASE WOULD HAVE NO GROUNDS FOR STAYING AND ARAB PRESSURE WOULD FORCE THEM TO LEAVE.

12. ISRAEL/EGYPT. ASKED TO ASSESS RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL, ABU GHAZALA SAID FROM A MILITARY PERSPECTIVE THERE ARE NO PROBLEMS. HE EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE IN THE LIAISON SYSTEM AND HIS NEW CHIEF BGEN FARUQ LABIB. ALTHOUGH EGYPT PERCEIVES NO MILITARY THREATS FROM ISRAEL, ISRAEL'S INVASION OF LEBANON, THE LACK OF PROGRESS ON THE PALESTINIAN PART OF CAMP DAVID AND TABA CREATED SERIOUS POLITICAL PROBLEMS.

13. PEACE PROCESS. SOLARZ ASKED ABU GHAZALA TO EXPAND ON HIS THINKING ON THE PEACE PROCESS. HE OUTLINED THREE OPTIONS: RESUME AUTONOMY TALKS; EXPANDED NEGOTIATIONS WITH JORDANIAN PARTICIPATION; OR AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE. ABU GHAZALA REPLIED THAT FIRST AND FOREMOST THAT THE U.S. SHOULD MAKE THE PEACE PROCESS ITS TOP PRIORITY AND GIVE IT SERIOUS STUDY. A COMBINATION OF RESUMED AND EXPANDED AUTONOMY TALKS MIGHT BE THE BEST APPROACH. BASED ON PAST EXPERIENCE, HE DOUBTED THAT AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE COULD SUCCEED AND THAT THE SOVIETS ARE SERIOUS. IN EXPANDING ANY NEGOTIATION??, ABU GHAZALA URGED THE U.S. TO TALK TO THE PLO AND SAID HE DOUBTED IF KING HUSSEIN COULD COME INTO NEGOTIATIONS WITHOUT PLO APPROVAL. HE SAID HE IS CONFIDENT THAT HUSSEIN DESIRES PEACE. ARAFAT'S ATTITUDE IS MORE PROBLEMATIC BECAUSE HE HAS DIFFICULTY CONTROLLING THE PLO. HE REQUIRES SOMETHING TO STRENGTHEN HIS POSITION WITHIN THE PLO. NO INITIATIVE WOULD HAVE ANY CREDIBILITY IF ISRAEL CONTINUES CONSTRUCTING SETTLEMENTS AND OTHER ADVERSE ACTIONS UPON THE WEST BANK. WHILE ARAFAT CONTINUES TO ACCORD AN INDEPENDENT STATE TOP PRIORITY, HE COULD ACCEPT CONFEDERATION WITH JORDAN. DEMILITARIZATION ALSO WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE, BUT NOT ISRAELI CONTROL. ABU GHAZALA SAID THAT SYRIA MAY WELL OPPOSE A SOLUTION SINCE IT IS RELATIVELY COMFORTABLE WITH THE CURRENT STALEMATE. HOWEVER, UNLIKE IN LEBANON, SYRIA DOES NOT HAVE A VETO OVER JORDAN. ASKED IF EGYPT WOULD ENGAGE WITHOUT JORDAN, ABU GHAZALA REITERATED THAT JORDANIAN/PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION IS THE BEST WAY TO PROCEED AND RECOMMENDED THAT ISRAEL MAKE COMPROMISES TO FACILITATE IT. ASKED ABOUT A LABOR GOVERNMENT VERSUS A LIKUD GOVERNMENT, ABU GHAZALA SAID PERSONALLY HE THOUGHT IT IS A MATTER OF CHANGING MASKS AND THAT HE PREFERS TO TAKE HIS MEDICINE WITHOUT SUGAR COATING. HE EMPHASIZED THAT THE U.S. MUST PURSUE ITS NATIONAL INTERESTS--STOP ASKING AND START TELLING.

14. JLP. SOLARZ ASKED ABU GHAZALA TO ASSESS THE PROPOSAL FOR JOINT LOGISTICS PLANNING WITH JORDAN. HE REPLIED THAT EGYPT HAS NO OBJECTIONS TO A JORDANIAN RDF, BUT DOUBTS THAT ITS INTERVENTION WILL BE ACCEPTABLE. IN THIS REGARD, HE NOTED THAT SAUDI ARABIA VETOED A REQUEST BY BAHRAIN FOR A JORDANIAN BATTALION TWO TO THREE MONTHS AGO. THE U.S. NEEDED TO WORK ON SAUDI ARABIA TO CHANGE ITS STRATEGIC VIEWS, HE SUGGESTED.

15. EGYPTIAN MILITARY. SOLARZ ASKED ABU GHAZALA TO BRIEF HIM ON CHANGES IN THE EGYPTIAN MILITARY SINCE 1973. ABU

SECRET

SECRET

84 4987344

SSO

PAGE 005

NC 4987344

TOR: 212121Z AUG 84

GHAZALA REPLIED THAT EGYPT HAS BEEN TRADING QUANTITY FOR QUALITY AND STRIVING TO REPLACE ITS RAPIDLY AGING SOVIET EQUIPMENT. PLANS CALL FOR A MORE MOBILE ARMY WITH REDUCED MILITARY EXPENDITURES TO REDUCE THE DRAIN ON EGYPT'S ECONOMY. ABU GHAZALA ARGUED THAT EGYPT'S DEFENSE BUDGET IS FAR LESS THAN OTHERS' IN THE REGION. HE ESTIMATED DEFENSE EXPENDITURES AT 11 PERCENT OF THE BUDGET AND SAID

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THIS YEAR'S ALLOCATION REPRESENTS A SLIGHT REDUCTION. TROOP STRENGTH IN 1973 WAS 900,000, HE SAID, WHILE CURRENT FORCES NUMBER SLIGHTLY MORE THAN 400,000. THE ULTIMATE GOAL IS A MILITARY OF 350,000. OVERALL, EGYPT'S MILITARY IS LESS CAPABLE THAN IN 1973, BUT SOME INDIVIDUAL UNITS ARE BETTER, ABU GHAZALA SAID.

16. SOVIET THREAT. IN RESPONSE TO ANOTHER QUESTION, ABU GHAZALA SAID HE SEES A MAJOR SOVIET THREAT TO THE REGION. HE MENTIONED SPECIFICALLY 60,000 SOVIET AND CUBAN ADVISORS IN AFRICA AND A MAJOR SOVIET PRESENCE IN SYRIA.

17. FMS. SOLARZ ASKED ABU GHAZALA IF THERE ARE ANY ISSUES HE WISHED TO RAISE. ABU GHAZALA ASKED ONLY FOR ASSISTANCE IN RAISING EGYPT'S FMS LEVEL FROM THE 1.175 BILLION DOLS PROPOSED BY THE EXECUTIVE TO THE 1.3 BILLION DOLS WHICH HAS BEEN THE BASIS FOR EGYPT'S FIVE-YEAR PLAN. THE AMBASSADOR MENTIONED THAT PRESIDENT MUBARAK MIGHT ALSO PRESS FOR RELIEF FROM FMS REPAYMENTS. SOLARZ REPLIED THAT HE FEELS A GOOD CASE CAN BE MADE FOR STRONG SUPPORT OF EGYPT IN VIEW OF EGYPT'S IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR COMMON INTEREST IN THE AREA. HE THEN OBSERVED THAT IT WOULD BE VERY HELPFUL IF EGYPT COULD FIND A WAY TO RETURN ITS AMBASSADOR TO TEL AVIV. THAT ACTION COULD GREATLY FACILITATE EFFORTS TO SECURE ADDITIONAL FUNDING. ABU GHAZALA NOTED THE COMPLICATIONS INVOLVED--ESPECIALLY LEBANON--BUT ENCOURAGED SOLARZ TO MAKE THIS POINT DIRECTLY TO MUBARAK. VELIOTES

END OF MESSAGE

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